

**Hon. Members of Parliament**  
**Chairman House of Chiefs and Other Royal Highnesses**  
**His Excellencies Heads of Mission**  
**Cooperating Partners**  
**The Permanent Secretaries**  
**Senior government Officials**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am extremely delighted to officiate as guest of honour at this important event at which the research findings on the management of Game Management Areas (GMAs) among other research results will be disseminated. GMAs are buffer zones surrounding national parks and serve as important areas for human settlements and wildlife conservation. Over the years, GMAs have increasingly come under immense pressure due to population increase and rapid economic growth. It is for this reason, that we welcome research that will inform policy on the effective management of these areas.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am informed that this one day public forum entitled ***“Insights Into Natural Resource Management and Rural Development In Zambia, Moving from Research Evidence to Action”*** is a joint effort of the Natural Resources Consultative Forum (NRCF), the Community-Based Natural Resource Management Forum (CBNRMF), the University of Zambia (UNZA), the Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF), and the Food Security Research Project (FSRP). This collaboration between the ACF/FSRP, the NRCF, CBNRMF and University of Zambia is highly commended. The assistance from the Cooperating Partners who have supported the research is highly appreciated.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am informed that participants to this forum are drawn from a broad spectrum of stakeholders in natural resource management ranging from government, quasi – government, non government, colleges and universities, rural communities, private sector and cooperating partners.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Government is committed to working towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through the Fifth National Development Plan as the vehicle for attaining the MDG targets. Of great relevance to this gathering are Goals no. 1 ***“Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”*** and no. 7 ***“Take measures to ensure environmental sustainability”***

I am pleased to inform you that the legal and policy frameworks aimed at improving and managing our environment and natural resources are in place whilst others are under review to strengthen them. The Government adopted the National Policy on Environment in 2007 and was officially launched this year, whilst the wildlife and forestry policies are currently under review. However, it is acknowledged that for these interventions to yield the desired results of maintaining environmental integrity and fostering sustainable development there is need to place emphasis on implementation by the various partners.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

In line with overall Government policy, my Ministry’s mandate is mainly to provide a policy framework for management of the environment and natural resources sector and

coordinating its implementation. In recognition of the fact that the government cannot implement all interventions on its own, the policies for the sector provide for the involvement of other players such as civil society organisations community based organisations and the private sector in managing the resources. In this regard, the policies provide for innovative approaches such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the management of the country's natural resources, particularly wildlife and Joint Forestry Management (JFM) with local communities in the forestry sector.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Given that the theme of this forum focuses on research, I wish to recognise and appreciate the support of our Cooperating Partners in research, policy development and implementation and institutional development in the natural resources sector. Most of you may be aware that My Ministry on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009 launched an environment and natural resources sector programme called the Environment and Natural Resources Management and Mainstreaming programme (ENRMMP). The Programme has recognised the role of civil society organisations in reaching the vulnerable segments of our society. The Ministry, will under this programme, reach out to ensure that environmental mainstreaming is part and parcel of the country's development efforts. In addition, the Programme will also establish an Environmental Fund to support interventions in the sector by various stakeholders. I, again wish to call upon all organisations present here to take advantage of this financing window to intervene where, hitherto, you could not due to limited resources.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The impact of climate change such as droughts and floods on vulnerable sectors of our economy such as agriculture will continue to persist until we adopt sustainable agricultural practices. The agricultural sector needs to particularly respond to the shifting agro ecological zones by conducting research in improved seed varieties that are suitable to the changing weather patterns. There is, therefore, need to invest in agricultural research so as to raise small-holder farmer productivity and incomes and thereby ensure food security at the community levels.

My Ministry, has in this regard, facilitated a financing facility of US\$ 3.5 million from the Global Environmental Fund (GEF) to pilot a programme that aims at improving agricultural productivity in agro-ecological zones I and II as part of adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to take this opportunity to inform you that as the country prepares to attend the COP 15 in Copenhagen, one of the issues that we shall advocate for is the establishment of a Global Adaptation Fund to assist poor countries like ours, whose capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change is severely hampered due to our economic circumstances. We remain hopeful that we shall negotiate for additional funding over and above the current support through Official Development Assistance.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me to focus more on the status of Game Management Areas which fall under the jurisdiction of my Ministry. As you are aware, GMAs comprise about 22% of our country's land mass. Human activity and rapid economic growth threaten the existence of GMAs. Serious threats include illegal off take of resources particularly wild animals, birds and forest products, human settlement and related activities encroaching into conservation areas,

uncontrolled bush fires, deforestation especially for charcoal production, shifting cultivation, unplanned expansion of commercial agriculture and expanding unregulated fish camps.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As policy makers, the Government wants to understand how to improve the management of GMAs in order to improve the livelihood of the people living in those areas, the habitat and wildlife resources. Government, therefore, welcomes your efforts and would endeavour to study and take on some of the recommendations of the research.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I conclude my remarks, I wish to reiterate that natural resources provide a basis for sustainable tourism development because tourism is a vehicle for economic growth due to its potential to generate employment and foster rural development. The Government will encourage community participation in tourism development as this is one of the major avenues for pro-poor development tourism

I now wish to officially declare this forum on Insights on Natural Resource management and Rural Development in Zambia officially open.

I thank you.

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